

[AcxIV]

Mrs. Erlynne. Everything?

"Lady Windermere. Yes.

[Pause.

Mrs. Erlynne.* Did your father often speak to
you of your
mother ?

Lady Windermere. No, it gave him too much pain.
He told me
how my mother had died a few months after I
was born.
His eyes filled with tears as he spoke. Then he
begged me
never to mention her name to him again. It
made him
suffer even to hear it. My father—my father
really died of
a broken heart. His was the most ruined life I
know.

Mrs. Erlynne, [Rising.] I am afraid I must go now.
Lady
Windermere.

Lady Windermere. [Rising.] Oh, no, don't.

Mrs. Erlynne. I think I had better. My carriage
must have
come back by this time. I sent it to Lady
Jedburgh's with
a note.

Lady Windermere. Arthur, would you mind
seeing if Mrs.
Erlynne's carriage has come back?

Mrs. Erlynne. Pray don't trouble, Lord
Windermere.

Lady Windermere. Yes, Arthur, do go, please.

[*Lord Windermere hesitates for a moment*
and looks at
Mrs. Erlynne. She remains quite
impassive. He leaves
the room.

[*To Mrs. Erlynne ^* Oh! What am I to
say to you?

You saved me last night. [*Goes towards*
her.

Mrs. Erlynne. Hush—don't speak of it.

Lady Windermere. I must speak of it. I can't let
you think
that I am going to accept this sacrifice. I am
not. It is too
great. I am going to tell my husband
everything. It is
my duty.

Mrs. Erlynne. It is not your duty—at least you
have duties
to others besides him. You say you owe me
something ?

Lady Windermere. I owe you everything.

Mrs. Erlynne. Then pay your debt by silence.
That is the
only way in which it can be paid. Don't spoil the
one good
thing I have done in my life by telling it to any
one. Promise
me that what passed last night will remain a
secret between
us. You must not bring misery into your
husband's life.
Why spoil his love? You must not spoil it. Love
is easily
killed. Oh! how easily love is killed. Pledge me
your word,
Lady Windermere, that you will *never* tell
him. I insist
upon it.

Lady Windermere. [With bowed head.] It is your
will, not mine.